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ABSTRACT

The do's and don'ts of educational film production are briefly reviewed in this guide. Particular emphasis is given to the sponsor-filmmaker relationship and the various responsibilities of each. Also discussed are the reasons for either making or not making a film. The whole sequence of making a film is presented from the selection of a producer and a budget to the actual script preparation and shooting. A glossary of terms and acronyms is provided. Sample formats of fiction and non-fiction scripts are shown. (MC)

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SO YOU WANT TO HAVE A FILM MADE: A GUIDE FOR FILM SPONSORS

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and

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Variation Films
Palo Alto, California

January 1973

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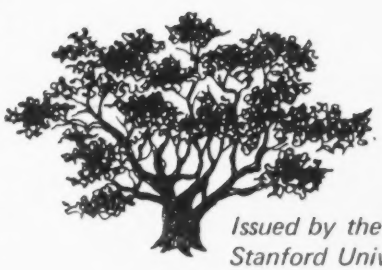

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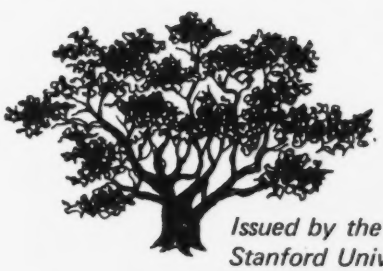

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Introduction

One factor in the failure of so many of the thousands of sponsored films produced each year is the inability of the film sponsor and the filmmaker-producer to understand one another. The typical sponsor knows little about the problems and possibilities of film. The typical filmmaker, on the other hand, may have just completed a documentary about grape harvesting and be shooting an advertising film while dickering with a psychiatrist about a possible film on the latter's particular innovation in the field of encounter groupings, and may not have the time to gain a thorough understanding of the sponsor's needs. And so, when the two do meet to discuss their film, the filmmaker is likely to be in a hurry, and the sponsor in the dark.

This problem is only one particular case of one huge problem in an age of specialization. The most conscientious filmmaker can no more drop all other projects and spend a year studying the sponsor's area of interest than can the sponsor take a year off to make films. Nevertheless, alleviating this problem of communication–the sponsor's side of it–is what we hope this paper will do. We believe that an elementary understanding on the part of the sponsor will normally result in more responsive work from the filmmaker he engages.

Why You Shouldn't Make a Film

Most of the verbiage written about film, particularly that aimed at sponsors, makes great claims for film. Among the many things that have been claimed for the medium are that films cause revolutions, raise aspirations, "move people," act as "the strings of the lyre of the modern poet," "redeem physical reality," offer "immediate experiences," "tell it like it is," bind nations, sell products, and motivate, inspire, and educate.

These general claims about film as a medium are useless. For every film which could be said to "tell it like it is," there are many more which tell it like it isn't. For every film that motivates (and what does it mean to "motivate"?), a hundred bore. Most educational films mis-educate. Films don't, in general, sell products; they merely add to the cost.

The film *medium* doesn't do these things. Particular films may. Good films can motivate or enlighten, tell the truth, resemble poetry, or whatever. But good prose, good television, good theater, good art, good journalism, good conversation, and good experience can do these things, too.

There is one way that film, considered as a medium, differs from other media. Films need less coding, and thus require less decoding, than other media. This means that the salient vocabulary of film is more *concrete* than that of other media. To convey a character's fatness, a writer must either write "fat" and leave the rest to the reader's imagination or attempt a more precise or vivid description by means of qualifiers ("outrageously fat"), synonyms ("plump"), simile ("fat as a hog"), metaphor ("a tub of lard"), or digression ("While he was certainly not obese, he was fat enough to...").

A filmmaker can simply show the fatness with little distortion between reality and image. The same holds true for sound. The filmmaker doesn't need adjectives, adverbs, similes, metaphors, or onomatopoeia; he simply records the sound, which is thus encoded with little distortion (abstraction). On the criterion of concreteness, film has it over slide presentations and illustrated booklets because film can show–rather than describe–motion; over theater, because film can vary the perspective (close-ups, long shots, pans, etc.); and even over television because the film image is sharper–more concrete–than the video image.

But this isn't the end of the story. It is important to recognize that this concreteness isn't always an advantage. In certain kinds of films, although not the kind a sponsor would normally be involved in, concreteness can limit or stultify. Imaginative fiction often requires an imaginative response, and films often leave too little to the imagination. They become authoritarian. Everyone who has read *Crime and Punishment* has his own image of Raskolnikov, but there's only one way to envision Bonnie or Clyde. Franz Kafka, who compared cinema to "the strings of the lyre of the modern poet," also wrote, "Films are iron shutters."

The concrete image is also a problem when the information to be communicated must be abstract yet precise. Almost any scientific film must confront this limitation. It is not possible to convey the concept of, say, "3/17" by concrete images only. If you show a "whole," and then cut out 3/17 of it and move the piece to one side, the audience can grasp only that something like a sixth of the whole has been detached. Much of the information a sponsor may want conveyed might be necessarily abstract and necessarily precise. The concreteness, the specificity, of the film image is the antithesis of the kind of "language" appropriate to such information.

But now we are approaching the end of the story (our version of it, anyway). What makes film potentially a strong medium for communication and an exciting one to work in is that–besides its potential for concrete images–film does not have to rely exclusively on concrete images. The sound track lends itself to discursive language (commentary, dialogue, and voice-over) and, to a lesser extent, the picture track to more abstract language. Thus, any film can be a synthesis of discursive and abstract languages on the one hand, and concrete images and sounds on the other. So, while a purely abstract language such as mathematics is far superior for certain purposes than the concrete presentations of shots and sounds, the synthesis between the two (or more) levels of communication can be far more powerful than the one alone. The piece which is 3/17 of the whole can be precisely indicated to be 3/17 (either in the commentary or on the picture) and visualized as well. Of course, not all films, nor the whole of any film, would benefit from this possibility of synthesis; the point is that such a synthesis is available when appropriate.

We believe that for almost any topic, idea, concept, event, phenomenon, or process–any potential film material–a film can be made which effectively employs the medium's capability of combining the concrete and abstract "vocabularies" available to it. The hitch is in achieving the appropriate synthesis. There are no rules which guarantee success. Each film is a new adventure, and its success depends on common sense, skill, talent, and persistence. Each potential film must be analyzed, developed, and approached on its own particular purpose, nature, and criteria. Worse, whether it's a good film or a bad film, it costs money. Therefore, while it can be argued that the film medium offers certain intrinsic advantages in its multiple-channelled information capacity, it can also be argued that the potential advantages, being elusive, are not large enough to risk the expense.

Why You Should Make a Film

The authors believe that from the financially-accountable sponsor's point of view, the reasons in favor of sponsoring a film are found not so much in the intrinsic capabilities of the medium but rather in the sociology of information flow. For these kinds of reasons, a merely competent film is likely, we assert, to be more effective than a competent or even rather good journal article, monograph, brochure, pamphlet, newsletter, slide presentation, or booklet. And although a really good film is as difficult to produce as a really good anything, a competent film is comparatively easy to guarantee.

For the sponsor with a message, there are at least four sociological factors which favor film. First, any film, considered as an event, almost invariably has an aspect of novelty about it. Compared to a journal article or a brochure, a film is a rare event. This novelty means that when a relevant film arrives at a botany department or a secondary school or an investment office, the intended audience is very likely to see the film. Films don't wind up in the waste basket or filed away half-read. People seem more prepared to give a film a go. And once they have, they will normally give it a full go, unless it is really bad, really tedious.

Another factor here is the comparative effortless response needed from the communication receiver. Reading all the way through something takes positive effort, even if often slight. In the case of a short film, positive effort is required in order to discontinue the communication. The film viewer has to get up and walk out, or someone has to turn off the projector. Even daydreaming is difficult when all those sounds and images are bombarding you. Even a mildly boring film is likely to be endured. The experience can even be rather pleasant. "This is like a shower bath," Ludwig Wittgenstein said of the movies.

If the novelty of the event is cancelled out by a boring film, and if the film is so boring that it takes more effort to endure the film than to leave it, then the "captive audience" aspect of many film-viewing situations may yet save the day for the sponsor. It's one thing to walk out of an informal, small-audience viewing situation; it's another to climb over people's knees and step on their toes, perhaps elbowing an old lady in the head, while making one's way along a darkened row of seats to the aisle. Few people care to risk the hazards of walking out of films, particularly when the film is not a two-hour feature but a short film, promising imminent relief.

It is also likely that at least something from a competent film will be attended to and remembered. It has been shown that the mass media have a "status conferral" function, i.e., that merely by virtue of appearing in a medium, a person, a place, an event achieves a certain status. A name's appearance in, say, the newspaper suggests its owner is important. We believe that for the kinds of topics most sponsors are likely to be interested in, film carries a larger "status conferral" function than print. If we're right, then, all else being equal, a topic presented in a film is more

likely to be taken seriously (if not consciously so) than the same topic presented in a more accessible medium.

These factors do not by any means guarantee some success to a film. There is, we believe, a danger always lurking when a bad film is presented to a captive audience–the danger of a captive-audience backlash. People will tolerate a merely competent film or even a poorly made one as long as it is honest and treats its audience with some respect. Unfortunately, too many films–particularly advertising films, but also instructional and educational films–are not only obviously dishonest but also treat their audiences as if they were not people in a theater, but rats in a cage, rats to be stimulated into responding in a desired way. The hard sell is one example of this, the soft sell often another. Pedantry and condescension plague educational and instructional films. When people are treated as a mass, this approach may regrettably work if the sponsor's criterion of success is the number of people responding in the desired way (e.g., buying his product or answering a multiple-choice exam question correctly). But such an approach may also create a latent, deep resentment in the audience, a resentment which, in many cases, may rise to the surface, particularly in the case of more specialized films aimed at specialized or sophisticated audiences. It is unlikely that many potential sponsors reading this paper would want to sponsor such a film, but some might . . . and many a filmmaker can think only in these terms, and will sell the approach, overtly or subtly, if not always consciously, to the susceptible sponsor.

The First Steps

Once he has decided to sponsor a film, the sponsor first sets a budget limitation for the film, engages a producer (filmmaker) for the film, and decides upon an approach. Which of these three steps comes first will vary in each case. Usually, the three steps are mutually dependent and thus develop together. The following discussion of these three steps will be misleading if their interdependence is not kept in mind.

Selecting a Producer

To ensure that he engages the producer best suited for his purposes, the sponsor should consider several producers, and make his decision based on several criteria.

One criterion is the quality of the producer's recent work. The sponsor should ask to see a potential producer's recent films, and should try to judge both the technical and the "message" quality of the films. Most sponsors will have seen enough films during their lifetimes to judge both the technical and the message quality largely on the basis of impression. If the film looks sloppy, it looks sloppy . . . and that's a judgment. The sponsor who wants to consider technical quality in more detail may look out for:

1. **Poor lighting**. There are two things a sponsor can look for here. One is dimly-lit scenes in which the object of interest is not clearly seen. Another is "flat" lighting, lighting which is so uniform that there are no shadows, no high and low density areas. Flat lighting emphasizes the two-dimensionality of the film image.

2. **Poor sound**. "Tinny" sound, sound with echoes, or needless background noise (e.g., a buzz or a drone under dialogue) is an indication of poor sound technique.

3. **Exposures**. Over-exposures and under-exposures will be irritating and thus obvious to the sponsor.

4. **Jerky zooms**. Many a zoom shot is marred by jerkiness. A good zoom will progress or accelerate smoothly. Jerkiness will be obvious to the sponsor if he looks for it.

5. **Poor pans**. A poor pan shot is one which doesn't keep pace with the movement it is meant to follow, or one which is unnecessarily jerky, or one which pans too fast across stationary objects so that a "strobosconic" effect is created.

There's much more to technical quality than the above considerations, but they are good indicators of the overall technical competence of the film. Of course, the sponsor should not consider them in isolation from the purpose, shooting conditions, and budget of the film, which all affect technical quality.

Judgment of message quality is largely impressionistic, too. Merely by experiencing the film, the sponsor can judge its clarity and interest, the two primary values (see section on "Approach") of a good film. A boring or muddled or inaccurate film speaks for itself. Again, though, the sponsor may look at a film in more detail in order to make a more thorough judgment of message quality. Here are some things he might consider:

1. **Over-reliance on technique**. Plaguing contemporary films is the arbitrary use of stylistic devices–zoom shots, pans, swish pans, "cinema verite," et al.–which contribute nothing to the film's message, and often function to cover up a film's vacuity. The sponsor can ask of each zoom, pan, etc., whether or not it has a purpose, whether or not it enhances the film's message.

2. **Under-use of technique**. The other side of this

coin is the overly-simple technique. One very simple and too-much-used device is "the talking head." Often, it will be clear to the sponsor that another more visually and aurally interesting way of conveying the material could have been used.

3. **Unimaginative images.** In most documentary situations, the filmmaker is stuck with the content presented. Few documentary films lend themselves to legitimate manipulation of the material to be filmed, but educational, instructional, and documentary films do. The sponsor can ask of each film viewed whether or not the filmmaker conveyed the film's concepts or information in imaginative ways. The metaphorical, analogic, or hyperbolic image may often be more appropriate than the literal (realistic) one.

4. **Commentary.** The commentary or narration is one of the important resources available to the non-fiction film, but it is also one of the most abused. There is a strong tendency for writers, often at the sponsor's behest, to emphasize accuracy and completeness of the information conveyed in the commentary at the expense of compatibility with image and sound effects. Much commentary is too literary; it sounds like it is being read from a journal article or textbook. Commentary is often too thorough, coopting to itself too much of the film's functions. Much commentary is deadly, and pretentious in tone.

The two criteria of technical quality and message quality are ultimately related, ultimately inseparable, like "form" and "content" in art and literature. Some would argue that they shouldn't be considered separately. But it is perfectly legitimate to treat them separately, and often necessary, just as we normally treat "time" and "space" separately. Unlike time and space, though, technical and message quality are not measurable. The sponsor cannot assign meaningful numerical values to them. The most he might be able to say might be, for example, is, "Well, this film seemed a little better technically than the first two, but the very first one seemed the most imaginative." And he has to keep in mind possible factors other than the filmmaker's ability–factors such as the subject matter, the budget, the shooting conditions, and the sponsor's influence. Consistency, though, is a pretty good indication of the filmmaker's ability. If the sponsor sees several of a producer's films, and all of them are unimaginative, then the filmmaker cannot defend himself by pointing to the sponsors' briefs, because the odds are great that at least one of those previous sponsors would have been open to alternative suggestions from the filmmaker had he offered any.

There are two other criteria the sponsor may use when selecting a producer. One is the producer's attitude toward talking with the sponsor. Does the producer seem willing to spend some time with the sponsor discussing the latter's needs? Is he attentive, thoughtful, and communicative? Does he seem direct and open about budgeting and time? The other criterion is the producer's reliability. A few phone calls by the sponsor should be sufficient to determine this. Some of the calls should be to previous sponsors. Is the producer accurate in his budget estimates? Does he deliver the film on schedule? Again, though, some of these matters must be weighed against others. For example, a filmmaker who is always too optimistic about completion dates but always delivers a first-rate film may be the one the sponsor should choose.

One consideration the sponsor need not place much weight on is the filmmaker's facilities. A filmmaker needn't own a single piece of equipment in order to make films. The dependence upon rented equipment doesn't necessarily increase the cost of a film; the equipment-owning filmmaker has to worry about maintenance, overhead, and capital investment. If the filmmaker rates high on the quality of his films, the accuracy of his budget estimates, and his reliability in other ways, the sponsor needn't worry about where he gets his equipment.

Setting the Budget

It is a rule of thumb that a 16-millimeter color film produced by a commercial company will cost approximately $1,200 to $2,000 per minute of film in the final print. Thus, a ten-minute color film will cost about $12,000 to $20,000. Many sponsors will not be able to afford a film which follows this rule of thumb. Fortunately, films can be made much cheaper than the rule suggests. The cost of a film will depend largely on the subject matter and approach, but the sponsor can in some cases reduce the cost considerably from the amount suggested by the rule of thumb. The sponsor who wants to reduce costs can investigate the following possibilities:

1. If the producer is working for a straight fee only, he has to charge more than he would if he were offered a share of the film's profits. If the sponsor's film is potentially marketable, then he should consider negotiating with the producer towards a smaller fee and a share of the profits. An offer of such a negotiation may be a good test of a producer. In most cases, a good producer will either favor this arrangement or say very frankly that although the film may

have a useful purpose, it is not, in his opinion, highly marketable. A profit sharing arrangement often has the non-financial advantage of increasing the filmmaker's interest in the film's quality.

2. The small, new film company, particularly one staffed by young filmmakers, often is more receptive to less lucrative film contracts than the more established companies. A new company needs the work, and will, if it is any good, jump at the chance to produce a good film for a small financial return.
3. There are plenty of independent filmmakers around who don't make many films, but make ones they really want to and in the way they want. Such a filmmaker is likely to take a film assignment which interests him even if it is not lucrative.
4. A large film distributor, particularly of educational films, may, if your film idea appears to him to be marketable, be willing to advance you all or part of the money needed. His interest may also depend on your reputation. Usually, the more money advanced, the more strings attached.
5. A number of colleges and universities offer at least one film production course. The big problem facing students and staff is usually the scarcity of production money. The students are often quite willing, even eager, to work for a small fee or none at all just for the opportunity to make a film. The sponsor who has access to such a training center may be able to interest a very competent young filmmaker in his project.
6. The script for a film is one of the most important steps in film production, even if the script is little more than a well-developed outline. The filmmaker usually and rightly budgets for the script and the research he must do in order to write it. In some cases, the film the sponsor wants made will be straightforward enough, or simple enough, that with a little study and effort, he could write the script himself. A demonstration film, for example, of a scientific operation may be a relatively simple matter to script.

The Cost Estimate

It is customary for film sponsors to request detailed cost estimates from prospective producers. These estimates should include not only a budget for production of the film, but also such items as the cost of additional prints, the manner and schedule of payment, and any other information pertinent to the film's cost or ownership.

The production budget, if it is detailed enough, can do much to reveal a producer's desire to make a quality film. Some of the items that might be used as indicators are these:

1. Is the shooting ratio sufficient? A producer should plan to shoot an ample amount of film stock so that he will not be forced to use substandard material in the finished film.

Almost no fully produced film should be budgeted at a ratio lower than 5:1. (Filmstock exposed:length of finished film); 8:1 or 10:1 is average, while some loosely scripted documentaries may have ratios of 20:1 or 50:1.

2. How much time does the producer plan to spend in the photographic and editing phases of the film? Slighting either of these important phases will have an adverse effect on quality. There is an especial tendency to budget insufficient time for photography, since it requires more expense per day than any other facet of the production.

3. Is money budgeted for a complete sound mix? For a professional narrator? A producer should not try to scrimp on outside expenses, unless he is doing so at the sponsor's request.

There are many more items in a budget that might be evaluated in the same way. What the sponsor should look for is a willingness on the part of a producer to spend money on materials and outside services as well as his own salary and profit.

In evaluating a budget, it might be useful to use the following "typical" breakdown of relative costs:

30%–Materials and outside services. Includes film, laboratory expenses, narrator, actors and outside facilities.

30%–Overhead. Office rent and staff, depreciation of equipment, etc. Includes equipment rental if the producer does not own his equipment.

30%–Time. Includes services of production personnel, i.e., cameraman, director, editor, etc.

10%–Profit and contingency.

For a sample budget, see Appendix 4.

The Film's Approach

A sponsor or a filmmaker will often worry too much over finding a gimmick for a film. An imaginative,

appropriate, and well-developed gimmick may help a film about a hackneyed subject, or a film about a subject not visually interesting enough for straightforward treatment. But there are problems with gimmicks. First, a gimmick can assume more importance than the topic, so that instead of adapting the gimmick to the topic, the filmmaker adapts the topic to the gimmick. Second, a gimmick is often unnecessary. And third, too much thought given to discovering and developing a gimmick can lead the filmmaker and sponsor away from the two most important qualities of good film (and of effective communication in general). These two qualities are *clarity* and *interest*.

It would be pretty hard to prove this, and we won't try. But the importance of clarity is not likely to be disputed. You can't convince someone of something unless he understands what it is you're trying to get him to believe. Yet the singular obviousness of the value of clarity often slips from the mind. Speaking of good writing, the great novelist Anatole France was once moved to emphasize, "First, clarity; then again clarity; and, finally, clarity." In fact, almost any good writer, when asked about the most important literary quality, will specify clarity, rather than some strategy of style or technique.

Awareness of the importance of clarity seems much more evident in non-fiction films than in academic papers, perhaps because more appears at stake in the case of a film, or because the concepts presented in film are normally simpler. However, the clarity in a film is misplaced when the commentary alone is given the job of clarification. In such a case, the film is clear in its discursive channel at the expense of the more mysterious but valuable syntheses of channels. And discursive clarity is not always effective, because the commentary may be the channel least attended to by the audience. In addition, a sentence clearly understood when read is not always clearly understood when heard, particularly if it is competing with visual information.

Complicating matters is the astoundingly frequent absence of interest in non-fiction films. Interest, as a quality in effective communication, is a much more elusive concept than clarity. Clarity may be difficult to define, but few would claim not to know its meaning, and few would deny that at least on an elementary level, there are rules which ensure clarity (e.g., if you want the audience to have a clear idea of the details of a man's face, you show the face in close-up, not in a long shot). But what do we mean by interesting? And if we can assume a common understanding, then how does a film achieve interest? This is a difficult question indeed.

And yet, interest is something we recognize in a film that has it, perhaps because so few films have enough of if. If one tries to specify what quality interesting films have in common, he might find that the word "new" recurs. One film had a "new twist," another a "new insight," another a "new subject." "Interestingness" defined partly as "newness" is still pretty vague, but it may lead somewhere. Consider Dr. Johnson's famous comment about the function of writing: "New things are made familiar, and familiar things are made new." If Dr. Johnson's dictum applies to film communication, then perhaps we can say, elementary as it might sound, that for a film to be interesting, something new must be communicated. Either the material must be something new to the audience, something they're unfamiliar with, or the film must achieve a new way of looking at familiar material. Anthropological films or nature films might present new material in this sense—"The Tribe That Hides From Man," for example. Frederick Wiseman's documentaries ("Hospital," "High School," "Law and Order") are examples of films which make the familiar new in Dr. Johnson's sense: They treat familiar institutions with freshness and insight.

If we pursue this line of thought, then we might conclude that to the degree a film has new things to communicate, then the film's interest will depend largely on the clarity of presentation. If the new material is essentially concrete, the job is rather straightforward. If the material is abstract, the job is to find concrete visual-aural images related to the material. If the material itself is not new, but rather the way of looking at it (the frame of reference, the point of view, the "slant") is new, then the task is subtler—insuring that the new slant is clear.

It appears that we have merely restated the problem by substituting newness for interest. Although the degree of newness is nearly as elusive as interest, we think that our way of putting the problem might be helpful to the sponsor. It may encourage him to concern himself primarily with *what* it is he has to say rather than with *how* he will say it. Not that he can ignore the how. But once the what is settled, figuring out how to communicate it becomes easier. And the how is not just the sponsor's task, but also, and primarily, the filmmaker's. The wise sponsor will have selected his filmmaker partly on the sponsor's judgment of the filmmaker's ability to express ideas in film. During the planning and scripting, the sponsor and filmmaker should be able to discover and develop the most appropriate way to make the sponsor's film both

interesting and clear.

In this discussion on approach, we've departed radically from the usual film sponsor's guide. Most guides emphasize identifying the purpose of the film, stating the objectives of the film, determining the target audience, and so forth. Yes, of course, these are important. But stressing these is like telling a batter to note how many men are on base, how many outs there are, and what the score is (except the conditions, in film, are much more indeterminate). These considerations won't do the batter much good if he strikes out. What we've done is more like urging the batter to keep his eye on the ball. It's a fundamental. Keeping one's emphasis on clarity and interest is like keeping your eye on the ball—something even the best filmmakers or batters can often fail to do without being aware of it. And the batter who can't count but always keeps his eye on the ball and hits it squarely is more valuable than the thinking strategist who dribbles a weak roller to the pitcher.

The Script

A script is best thought of as a plan. This can be anything from a general outline or point of view carried about in the filmmaker's head to a detailed document as precisely elaborated as an architect's drawing. Usually, it falls somewhere in between. The degree of detail, of spelling out, should depend on the sort of film desired. A film demonstrating how to carry out a certain experiment in physical science can be scripted in detail, but a documentary film about people (a crowd, a group, or an individual) will suffer from a too-detailed script.

There are no rules for gauging the most desirable degree of advance scripting for a particular film. But there is a certain way of thinking about the problem that may be helpful to the sponsor. He can arrive at an estimate of the importance of spontaneity in the action of the film. The more value placed on spontaneity, the less value will be a detailed script. For example, since it is unlikely that spontaneity would be an important value in a physical-science demonstration film, a precise script would be appropriate. But in, say, a sociological documentary about the behavior of people at a party, any advance scripting beyond a list of things to look for would likely be harmful. Several other factors may apply. For example, spontaneity is something that is achieved partly by a high shooting ratio, which increases costs.

The normal procedure for working up a script with a filmmaker is straightforward in its essentials. After sufficient discussion, the filmmaker develops a "treatment." A treatment is simply a prose statement describing the film in general terms—its style, its content, its structure, perhaps its strategy, purpose, and so forth. It may be in outline or essay form.

If the film is to be a documentary, the scripting may go no further than this, although the sponsor will usually require some revision until he is satisfied. But if the film is to be a demonstration film or a story film—any kind of film, even a documentary, which requires detailed scripting—then the satisfactory treatment is followed by a script indicating shots, sequences, commentary, sound, etc. Appendix 1 contains an example of a useful format for a detailed non-fiction script. Appendix 2 contains an example of a useful format for a fiction script.

The scripting stage in production requires a great deal from the sponsor in the way of communication, patience, and, when appropriate, firmness. Whatever the level of detail, the sponsor has the right to insist upon a clear script presentation from the filmmaker. The sponsor may have to be patient, because the genesis and development of a good plan for a film may take longer than its execution. And the sponsor must be prepared to communicate at length with the filmmaker about the script, for the filmmaker cannot know the subject matter as well as the sponsor does.

A note on narration... If the film is to contain narration, it is best that the script indicate mainly the content and style of the narration, not the precise ultimate wording. The narration must in the end be adapted to the visual material, and this can be done only as the editing of the film nears completion. The sponsor should also bear in mind that good narration does not necessarily read well.

The Sponsor's Role During Production

Whether the finished film will fulfill the promises of the script will depend on many factors, not the least of which is good fortune. It is important for a film sponsor to realize that filmmaking, particularly on a small scale, is largely a series of compromises between what might be and what must be. A good filmmaker working with a good script and a reasonable budget will not make too many compromises, but he will always have to make some.

After the script has been written and approved, the next stage is pre-production. This is the time when the physical elements of the film are pulled together—production crew and equipment are arranged for, the cast is selected (whether actors or "real" people) and locations are selected. Also, some test shooting

might be done to try out special techniques or experiment with lighting.

The pre-production phase is a critical one in the development of a successful film. If the filmmaker rushes into production without giving sufficient attention to pre-production details, he may be forced to make too many compromises.

Unfortunately, the sponsor is often an accomplice in the slighting of pre-production. The usual reason is a deadline that must be met and now looms menacingly close since about twice as much time as necessary was spent writing the script. The filmmaker wants to hurry the film along. Also, he'd much rather shoot film than research locations or try out lighting setups. The sponsor, in the interests of the film, must take his eye off the calendar long enough to make sure that pre-production planning is thorough.

When actual shooting finally begins, the sponsor may feel superfluous or downright unwanted. The problem is that filmmakers, like most people, don't work best with others looking over their shoulders. It may be that the sponsor doesn't want to see the film until it's finished, or that he just doesn't have the time to participate. But in most cases the sponsor will want to know what's going on in the production process, and he has a right to know. Whether he is a help or an obstacle will be determined by his relationship with the filmmaker and his knowledge of the production process.

When film is shot, the exposed film is taken from the camera and developed in a laboratory. This film, called "original," is never projected. Copies of it, called "prints," are used for editing and for exhibition. The first prints made from the original are called "rushes," "dailies," or "workprints."

The rushes are the first opportunity that the filmmaker has to look at his work, and viewing rushes can often be a cause of discord between sponsor and filmmaker. The sponsor feels that he ought to know what is going on, and that since he is paying for all this film, he ought to have a chance to look at it—all of it. The filmmaker, who may be shooting ten times as much film as the final version will contain, feels like a writer who is required to turn in all his rough drafts because his editor paid for the paper. Needless to say, there is no simple resolution to this problem. If each can understand the other's position, there may be some hope for maintaining a civil relationship.

When the sponsor *does* look at the rushes, he should keep several things in mind:

1. Much more film is shot than is needed in the final version. This is obvious, but since film is an expensive medium, the sponsor too often sees footage wasted on unsuccessful experiments as a waste of time and money. In fact it may mean that the filmmaker is trying to produce a good film and is spending extra time and effort in the attempt.

2. Films are rarely shot in sequence. Rushes can only be evaluated shot by shot, and as a whole, they have no meaning until they are edited. Once again, this is an obvious point. But since most of us watch films very subjectively, it is hard not to get an erroneous bad impression of rushes.

After the film has been shot, and the rushes viewed, the process of editing begins. Here again, the sponsor must understand the nature of the process in order to strike the proper balance between meddling and disinterest.

The first step in the editing process consists of picking the best shots from alternate "takes" and sequencing them as they might be sequenced in the final film. The result of this process is called a "rough cut."

The rough cut is more ordered than the rushes, but it is still a long way from the finished film. Most of the shots are too long; there are no laboratory effects such as dissolves and superimpositions; only part of the sound track is ready, or perhaps none; and the film is dirty and scratched from handling.

Many times, it is hard for a sponsor to overlook all the blemishes of a rough cut and see the film that it will eventually become. But he must make the attempt, because it is at this stage that decisions must be made about reshooting or dropping sequences that don't work. It may even be necessary to change some of the basic concepts of the film if "reality" as revealed by the camera does not agree with reality as conceived by the scriptwriter.

Assuming that the rough cut is reasonably acceptable, the next step is the "fine cut." In this stage, the picture is edited to its final length and decisions are made about technical matters such as the length and placement of dissolves. But the most important work in the fine cutting stage is that done on the sound track.

Up to now most of the work on the film has been with the picture alone. The exception to this is a film that contains a large amount of synchronous sound. In such a film, the sound track and the picture are cut together from the first stage of editing.

Because so much attention has been given to the picture, there is a tendency to overlook the importance of the sound. Also, there is the fast approaching deadline which tends to rush the last stages of editing. If the sound track is not given the attention it deserves, the

film will suffer. Sound, especially music, can do much to pace a film, to emphasize the dramatic contour.

If the film is to be narrated, now is the time when narration is finalized and recording is done. Since narrators can be expensive, it is a good idea to record a so-called "stratch track" with an amateur narrator so that the narration can be evaluated before the final recording is made. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that film narration must be judged by hearing it while looking at the picture. Narration on paper, particularly good narration, may seem simplistic, redundant or full of non sequiturs. This is for two reasons: 1) Good narration is written for the ear, not the eye; 2) Good narration works with the picture. The viewer knows more from watching the narrated picture than he might from experiencing either picture or narration alone.

It may seem wasted effort to record and edit a scratch track that will never be used in the film, but the small amount of extra time and effort involved is valuable insurance against a poor narration.

Besides narration, the film will have sound tracks for synchronous dialogue, sound effects, and music, depending on how much of each sound is used in the film. These sound tracks are prepared separately, and then electronically mixed together at the end of the editing process. Almost all films need at least three individual sound tracks. And more ambitious productions, such as feature films, may have a dozen or more.

It is easy to see that preparing sound tracks can be a much more complicated job than editing the picture. The picture most often consists of but a single image at a time, whereas the sound track may be a composite of any number of different sounds. Thus, it is important that sufficient time be allotted to this phase of the editing process.

It should be noted that though the actual work of preparing sound tracks is done at this point, the nature of those tracks should be considered at the very earliest stages of scripting and production. Too many films are made by simply shooting a lot of film, editing that film, and then adding some music and narration. Such a process may result in an acceptable film, but often it will produce a film that is little more than an illustrated lecture. Only through careful planning can a film realize the power that sound has to focus interest, provide pacing, and emphasize dramatic contour.

After the fine cut of the picture and sound tracks has been completed, the sound tracks are mixed onto a composite magnetic track, and the original film is "conformed" to the edited workprint. From these two elements, an "answer print" is struck.

The answer print is the sponsor's first opportunity to see his film as it will actually appear to an audience. Unfortunately, since the original has been cut and the sound tracks mixed, it is now too late to make any significant changes without incurring significant costs.

This, then, is the point where the sponsor's involvement in the production process can be appreciated. If he and the filmmaker have worked well together, the answer print will be acceptable. If the sponsor has waited until now to voice his opinions, the result may be an agonizing waste of time and money.

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Appendix 1

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR DETAILED NON-FICTION SCRIPT

This is a page from a script about library automation. The use of the double column—picture on the left, sound on the right—helps the sponsor and filmmaker imagine the interplay of sound and picture. It is useful when there is to be little lip-sync dialogue in the film.

20. ANIMATED LETTERS	
"SPIRES" merges with "BALLOTS."	Narr: In 1968, the complementary projects merge.
21. TWO-SHOT	
of Parker and Veaner, each of whom turns to the other, smiles, and then turns back to CAMERA as if to speak.	
22. INT. CAVE	
MCU on CRO-MAGNON man. Long hair, beard, hairy chest. Animal skin draped over one shoulder. He is chiseling crude hieroglyphics in the wall of the cave. There are paintings of Bison (after Altamira) on the wall. Man turns to CAMERA and grins.	(fx) chiseling.
Becomes apprehensive as he hears rumbling and notices falling rock.	(fx) loose rock falling. (fx) cave-in.
FADE TO BLACK	
23. EXT. STREAM	
ROBED figure reading papyrus. Looks up to sky, extends hand at sound of thunder. Worried. Rain starts falling.	(fx) thunder. (narr: Information storage and retrieval...
CU papyrus, disintegrating.	(fx) rain.
24. MOUNTAIN SLOPE	
MOSES-LIKE figure, carrying a heavy stone tablet, struggles up slope. Drops tablet on toe.	Narr: . . . Its status paralleling the rise and fall . . . Moses yelps in agony.
25. EXT. ALEXANDRIA (MOCK-UP)	
ELS. Library of Alexandria burns in distance. Biremes and triremes sail away.	Narr: (continuing) . . . of civilizations . . .
26. EXT. STREET NIGHT	
NAZI throws book on fire.	. . . its range and functions limited by its technology . . .
27. INT. MODERN LIBRARY STACKS	
Mod-dressed man, back to CAMERA, reaches up and removes a book from an ominously overloaded shelf. Man turns to CAMERA, and we see that he is the same man we saw in no. 22 above. He grins.	. . . and the value its host culture places upon it.
A book, then several, fall from above.	(fx) books falling.
FADE TO BLACK	

Appendix 2

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR A FICTION FILM

Following are two excerpts from a long fiction film. The first (no. 36) is a scene in which the style is conventional. The second (no. 9A) has a more complicated structure. Note that detailed information about the camera (angle, etc.) is not normally given; this would be determined on location. It is the action and dialogue that are detailed.

Note: These two script excerpts are the property of the National Film Board of Canada, and may not be reproduced without written authorization from the National Film Board of Canada.

36. EXT. BAR (THE PAS) NIGHT AUTUMN 36.

Morley and his two friends are standing at the side entrance of a bar that sits on a corner. The sound of the jukebox is heard from inside. Occasionally, there is the sound of a passing car. As a MINER, a white man, exits the building carrying a case of beer, the boys approach him. Morley exposes part of a small transistor radio he's hiding in his pocket.

MORLEY
(half-whisper)
Hey, wanna radio for
a coupla beers?

The man walks by them without answering. A second MAN, also white, approaches the side entrance of the bar.

MORLEY
Hey, wanna radio for
a coupla beers?

The man ignores them.

STEVE
Nobody's gonna trade
a coupla beers for
that radio.

FRIEND
There's only one way
we're gonna get a
coupla beers . . .

Morley pushes the radio back into his pocket. The three Indians assume positions against the side of the building, on both sides of the entrance. The sound of a man coming through the entrance is heard. Morley raises his hand to signal his friends to keep quiet. As the man, Johnny, exits, carrying a case (open at the top) of beer, Morley dashes in front of him and with each hand, grabs for a bottle. At the same time, Morley's two friends grab Johnny from behind.

CONTINUED

36. CONTINUED (2) 36.

JOHNNY
Hey!

A scuffle.

STEVE
It's Johnny!

The three friends immediately split, each in a different direction, as the case of beer falls to the ground. Empty-handed, Morley disappears around the back of the building. Johnny salvages the unbroken bottles.

JOHNNY
(offended; irritated)
Jeeze. Why didn't they just ask for a coupla beers?

With his foot, Johnny shoves the broken glass over to the edge of the sidewalk. Carrying the good bottles in the case, he walks toward the back of the building and turns down the alley running behind it.

9A. INT. CONFERENCE ROOM (W/INTERCUTS) 9A.

The three educators from scene 40 ahead. The first educator is reading from a book.

FIRST EDUCATOR
"*Can* the Indian respond effectively to increased opportunity?

SECOND EDUCATOR
(referring to book)
What's that?

FIRST EDUCATOR
"The Education of Indian Children in Canada."

THIRD EDUCATOR
The government publication.

FIRST EDUCATOR
Well, they're on the right track. . .

INTERCUT brief cut from "Encounter with Saul Alinsky," Part II.

ALINSKY
So far, I'm trying to find out what you *want*.

BACK TO SCENE.

SECOND EDUCATOR
(reading from book)
"Our whole society is changing more rapidly than ever before, and the Indian must catch up and then keep up."

CONTINUED

INTERCUT cut from Alinsky film.

ALINSKY
There are things you want. It boils down very simply. Do you want them? Then go out and get them.

BACK TO SCENE.

THIRD EDUCATOR
(reading from book)
"How can the Indian *want* enough *soon* enough?"

INTERCUT cut from Alinsky film.

ALINSKY
People must want *some*thing. If they don't want it, then you induce the appetite for it.

INTERCUT Uncle John (from scene 56 ahead).

UNCLE JOHN
Many an Indian has said: One of the deadliest things the white man has brought us is greed.

Appendix 3

GLOSSARY OF FILM TERMS

(Note: Those entirely capitalized are likely to appear in a script or treatment)

Answer Print	The first print made from the edited picture and sound track. Usually indicates where further lab work on exposures is needed. It is customary that this print becomes the property of the filmmaker.
ASA	Film speed, i.e., its sensitivity to light. The higher the ASA number, the "faster" the film, and the less light needed for exposure.
Backlight	Light source behind the subject. May give added feeling of three-dimensionality or a "halo" effect.
BCU	Big (extreme) close-up.
BG	Background.
Blow-up	An enlargement, e.g., from 16mm to 35mm. Results in a less sharp image.
CU or CS	Close-up (close shot).
CAMERA FOLLOWS	Camera follows the action the best way possible, which is determined on location.
Commentary	What the narrator says.
CUT-IN	An extrinsic image to be cut into an otherwise organic scene.
CUTAWAY	Shot of event or whatever which is part of a scene but not part of the main action.
CREDITS	The listing of production roles (producer, cameraman, etc.).
DISSOLVE	One image fades out as another fades on. The images are thus momentarily superimposed. Indicates change of time or location.
DOLLY (IN or OUT)	Camera moves forward or backward on a wheelchair or something else insuring smoothness. Gives more impression of depth than a ZOOM shot.
ELS	Extreme long shot.
ECU	Extreme close-up.
ESTAB. SHOT	Shot which establishes a scene's location and perhaps general character. Usually a long shot, including whole of location.

FX	Sound effects.
FADE (IN or OUT)	Image darkens until it's black, or slowly (a second or two) emerges from blackness to full light. Often used at beginning and end of film respectively. Formerly used for scene transitions.
Flat Lighting	Lighting that comes from no specific direction, so that it deemphasizes contour and makes subjects appear "flat."
FAST MOTION	The motion in the image moves faster than normal.
Film Speed	See ASA.
FREEZE FRAME	The image "freezes" (as in "stop-action"); motion suspended. Achieved by reproducing a frame many times over.
HAND-HELD CAMERA	Camera not on tripod, but held in hands. Supposedly gives a "you-are-there" effect.
Improvisation	Non- or loosely-scripted acting.
Lip-Sync	Synchronization of speaker's voice with speaker's lips.
LS	Long shot.
MS	Medium shot.
MULTIPLE IMAGE	More than one frame on the picture . . . maybe one scene in the left of the frame, another on the right.
MONTAGE	Nowadays refers to a string of images related in a thematic way.
Mix	The electronic mixing of the separate sound tracks into a composite.
Original	The film that is exposed in the camera. May be either positive (reversal) or negative.
PAN (LEFT or RIGHT)	Camera rotates on a vertical axis, thus moving horizontally across scene or following action.
POV	Point of view. The object of interest is shown from the point of view of the person (or thing) indicated.
POP-IN	A person or object suddenly appears within a scene.
Rough-Cut	The first attempt to assemble the visual elements of a film in their appropriate order and approximate length.
Rushes	The first print made from original. Normally used for editing. Also called "dailies."
REACTION SHOT	A shot showing someone's reaction to an event.

REVERSE ANGLE	Camera angle is the reverse from the one preceding it.
Sync sound	Synchronized sound.
SUPER (IMPOSITION)	One image on top of another.
SPLIT SCREEN	Frame is divided in two; one image on the left, another on the right.
SLIP FOCUS	One object in picture goes out of focus, and another comes in focus.
SWISH PAN	Pan so rapid that all definition is lost. Often used for transitions.
STILL	A still photograph.
TILT (UP or DOWN)	Camera rotates on a horizontal axis, thus moving up or down the object being filmed.
TRACKING SHOT	Camera moving parallel to action.
Talent	The word used to refer to performers engaged for a film, whether they have it or not.
Talking Head	A person talking to camera, like the 6 o'clock news.
Transfer	The transfer of sound from magnetic tape to 16mm magnetic film.
TITLES	Film's title and perhaps major credits appearing with them; also can refer to printed information preceding a scene or shot.
VOICE-OVER	The voice of a character *in* the film (not the narrator) continuing over a scene or image. Could have initially been lip-sync sound, but not necessarily.
Work Print	The film used in the editing process. May be the same as "rushes" or "dailies."

Appendix 4

SAMPLE BUDGET

This is a simplified budget for a 15 minute film shot primarily on location. It is appended as an example of a particular budget for a particular film and should be used only as a general guideline of relative costs. Needless to say, many possible budget items have been omitted.

Budget-1

Length: 15 minutes

Medium: 16mm color

Shooting ratio: 11:1

SCRIPTING AND PRE-PRODUCTION

Writer or Writer/Director (3 weeks)	$1200.

PRODUCTION

Materials

Film stock, processing and workprint (6000')	1500.	
¼" magnetic tape	100.	
Misc. expendables	100.	
		1700.

Labor

Cameraman (3 weeks)	1200.	
Director (4 weeks)	1600.	
Soundman/Asst. (3 weeks)	900.	
		3700.

Add: travel, per diems, actors, location rental, special equipment, additional production staff if needed.

EDITING

Materials and outside services

Sound transfer	300.	
Magnetic film	100.	
Misc. expendables	100.	
		500.

Labor		
Editor (4 weeks)		1200.
FINISHING		
Music scoring	600.	
Sound mix	300.	
Answer prints (2)	200.	
Conforming original	200.	
Narrator	150.	
Titles	100.	
Optical track and transfer	100.	
		1650.
Add: special effects, animation, internegative.		
		9950.
+ items labeled "add"		(3000).
TOTAL		(13,000).
OVERHEAD		4000.
PROFIT AND CONTINGENCY		1700.
		$18,700.

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